

MLA Style: Citing References in Text

The MLA citation style, commonly used in English literature, uses parenthetical references in the text of essays and papers to document sources. Sources are briefly identified by the author's last name and the page number of the specific material being used. At the end of your paper, you must include a detailed list of all the sources cited (called a **Works Cited** list). In-text references in your paper must point clearly to the corresponding entries in your Works Cited list.

The following examples illustrate how to cite sources in the text of your papers using MLA style. For further clarification and examples, please consult the *MLA Handbook 8th Edition* (LB 2369 G53 2016 SMREF).

Examples of citing references in text

One author

Give the author and page number in parentheses when citing a source. If your sentence explains who the author is and it is clear which work you are referring to, then you only need to give the page number in parentheses.

Examples:

Literary criticism has changed drastically since the late 1950s (Moss 7).

As Laura Moss states, literary criticism has changed drastically since the late 1950s (7).

Two authors

Include the last names of both authors with *and* in the middle.

Example:

Teaching with technology “can at once widen the scope and sharpen the focus of our ongoing discussions about the place of Shakespeare in the education of young people” (Desmet and Bailey 133).

Three or more authors

If there are three or more authors, the in-text citation begins with the first author's last name followed by *et al.*

Example:

Late 18th century English culture was thriving, thanks to John Boydell's Shakespeare gallery (Jung et al. 76).

No author

For a source where there is no apparent author, cite by the shortened title of the work. Put article titles in quotation marks and italicize book titles.

Example:

A focal point of the tour is a viewing of Shakespeare's wife's bedroom ("Creativity curated" 60).

Two or more sources in one citation

List all of the sources separated with a semi-colon.

Example:

In his early life, Chaucer was a noblewoman's page and later worked for the king (Skeat xi-xii; Rossignol xvii).

Citing indirect sources

While it is best to take material from the original source, occasionally you may need to use material from a source that is itself cited in another source. If you quote or paraphrase from material that is quoted in the source you have used, use *qtd. in* ("quoted in") before naming the source that you have used. In the following example, the writer is citing Minto, whom he has read in Matz. The entry in the Works Cited list will be for Matz's work.

Example:

William Minto believes that Shakespeare's sonnets to the young man are "in every way more powerful and mature" (qtd. in Matz 491) when compared to the sonnets to the woman.

Citing a source without page numbers

When citing a source that has no numbering of any kind (e.g., no page, paragraph, or section numbers), cite the entire source. Some electronic and non-print sources such as films, performances, and works of art fall into this category. Cite according to paragraph numbers

(with “par.” or “pars.”) or sections (with “sec.”) only if these are numbered in your source. Do not create your own page, paragraph, section, or scene numbers, etc.

Example of a source without page or paragraph numbers:

The director demonstrates Romeo’s immediate remorse by blending images of a slain Tybalt with Rio de Janeiro’s statue of Christ the Redeemer, now an unfinished monument in Shakespeare’s Verona (Luhmann).

Example of a source without page numbers, but with paragraph numbers:

The period’s literature reveals that the concept of the island nation is also “implicated in histories of invasion and of translation” (Griffiths, par. 12).

Examples of quotations with in-text citations

Quote selectively, and keep quotations as brief as possible. Quote accurately, reproducing the original exactly, including punctuation. Introduce or integrate the quotation smoothly and grammatically into your own sentence.

If you must make changes to the quoted material, put square brackets [] around your changes. Use three ellipsis points (. . .) to indicate where you have omitted words, phrases, or sentences within a quotation. Add a fourth period if the omission includes the end of a sentence in the original. Consult the *MLA Handbook* for more instructions.

Short quotations (no more than 4 lines in your essay)

Put short quotations (single words or phrases, up to 4 lines) in quotation marks with a citation at the end.

Example:

Rene-Dozier asserts that “there is no authoritative narrator in *Wuthering Heights*; the novel is not simply incoherent, but rather refuses to cohere” (757).

Block quotations (more than 4 lines in your essay)

If your quotation runs to more than 4 lines of text in your paper, indent the whole quotation half an inch from the left margin, double space and omit quotation marks. Place the citation outside the final punctuation of the quoted passage.

Example:

Matz describes how Shakespeare blurs the poetic and biological bonds in Sonnet 18:

The “eternal lines” that will preserve the young man past death are those of Shakespeare’s sonnets. They recall – only to replace – the family line, the inheritance from father to son that Shakespeare has been celebrating in most of the previous sonnets. By making reproduction a matter of poetry rather than sex, Shakespeare takes the place of two members of the young man’s future family: the son who will reproduce the young man and the wife who will be responsible for that reproduction. (480)

Poetry

If you quote part or all of a line of verse, put it in quotation marks within your text. If you include multiple lines, use a forward slash to indicate where the line breaks fall (/ , or // for a stanza break). Reproduce the lines exactly. Cite line numbers or other division numbers as well as page numbers, if they are numbered in your source. Verse quotations of more than three lines should be set off from your text as a block.

Example:

Marlowe uses gifts to persuade his love to stay with him, promising her “A gown made of the finest wool / Which from our pretty lambs we pull” (13-14).

Drama

Begin each part of the dialogue with the character’s name, indented half an inch from the left margin and written in all capital letters. Follow the name with a period and then start the quotation. Indent all subsequent lines in that character’s speech. When a new character speaks, start a new indented line. Maintain this pattern throughout the quotation. Quotations may require citing divisions like act, scene and line numbers (if the edition numbers the lines) or page numbers to be clear.

Example:

Shakespeare’s *King Lear* begins with Kent and Gloucester discussing division of the kingdom, and which of the dukes the King favors:

KENT. I thought the King had more affected the Duke of Albany than Cornwall.

GLOUCESTER. It did always seem so to us. But now, in the division of the kingdom, it appears not which of the dukes he values most, for qualities are so weighted that curiosity in neither can make choice of either’s moiety. (1.1.1-6)